

Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project

Project Summary: Title XII of P.L. 103-434, of October 31, 1994, authorized the Yakima River Water Enhancement Project (YRBWEP). The Project involves evaluation and implementation of structural and nonstructural measures to increase the reliability of the irrigation water supply and enhance stream flows and fish passage for anadromous fish in the Yakima River basin.

Two-thirds of the water conserved under the Basin Conservation Program, the Project's central feature, will remain instream and will be used to increase flow requirements for anadromous fish with one-third of the conserved water being used to improve the reliability of irrigation water supplies. In addition to the project's focus on river restoration through water conservation, YRBWEP also includes efforts to reinvigorate habitat on the Yakima River through land acquisitions and habitat restoration projects and to enhance Yakima Basin tributaries by improving water supplies and removing barriers for fish migration.

Strategic Value: The Yakima River basin has been and can again be an important contributor to the production of salmon and steelhead in the larger Columbia River basin. The Yakima River basin produces salmon that help support important commercial, sport and Tribal fisheries and contributes significantly to the perpetuation of valuable native wild fish stocks. The Yakima River basin also supports one of the largest and most productive agricultural regions in the world.

Benefits: Improvements in stream flows and fish passage conditions, together with enhanced spawning and rearing habitat, assist with the recovery of mid-Columbia steelhead and bull trout, listed under the Endangered Species Act. Streamflow improvements also benefit other salmon species in the basin which are of great value to the Yakama Indian Nation. Water conservation improvements also benefit irrigators by improving reliability of water supplies.



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